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Social and human rights questions: advancement of women

Follow-up to and implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 53/120, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report annually to the General Assembly, the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council on the follow-up to and progress in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.[1] Similar requests were contained in General Assembly resolutions 50/203 and 52/100.

2. In each of the three reports submitted in the course of a year, on a rolling basis, information is provided that is most pertinent to the respective intergovernmental body in order to facilitate its decision-making. The reports to the Economic and Social Council focus on facilitating the coordination function of the Council. The reports to the Commission on the Status of Women emphasize efforts undertaken by the Secretariat in support of mainstreaming a gender perspective and other follow-up activities. The reports to the General Assembly contain information from entities of the United Nations system, including specialized agencies and international financial institutions, as well as an analysis of activities undertaken at the national level, and by non-governmental organizations and civil society.

3. The present report is intended to update the information provided in the reports to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session, in 1998 (A/53/308) and the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session, in 1999 (E/CN.6/1999/2 and Add.1). It focuses on developments related to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in intergovernmental forums reporting to the Council, in the regional commissions and in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality since the submission of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/53) to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session in 1998.

II. Results of the Commission on the Status of Women

A. Agreed conclusions on women and health

4. In its agreed conclusions on women and health,[2] the Commission on the Status of Women requested States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to consider general recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women when preparing their initial and periodic reports under the Convention, including on article 12. The Commission suggested formulating policies favourable to investments in women's health and intensified efforts to bridge the gap between commitments and implementation. Maternal and essential obstetric care, including emergency care, should be provided and strategies to prevent maternal deaths should be implemented. The development of safe, affordable, effective and easily accessible female-controlled methods of family planning, including dual methods such as microbicides and female condoms was suggested.

5. With regard to human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), sexually transmitted diseases and other infectious diseases, the importance of the highest level of political commitment to mitigate their impact through, *inter alia*, the provision of social services and support, together with poverty alleviation, was mentioned. Reference was made to the stigmatization and social exclusion that surrounded these diseases and the need to protect infected women who revealed their HIV status. Counselling and encouraging men and women infected with HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases to inform their partners were also recommended.

6. The Commission called for the development of preventive and remedial health services for mental disorders that are related to stress, depression, powerlessness, marginalization and trauma. Research should be undertaken on gender differences in the causes and effects of the use and abuse of substances, including narcotic drugs and alcohol. Programmes aimed at reducing tobacco use by women and girls, including through gender-sensitive cessation programmes should be designed and implemented.

7. Measures in relation to occupational and environmental health were addressed in order to protect women workers in all sectors, including agricultural and domestic household workers, through effective health policies.

8. The Commission recommended mainstreaming a gender perspective into the curricula, as well as the training, of all health care and service providers in order to ensure high-quality health services for women that could help eliminate discriminatory attitudes and practices. A gender perspective should be developed and applied to treatment and prevention practice in the health sector. Opportunities that might arise through health sector reform and development should be used to integrate systematically the process of gender analysis in the health sector and to undertake gender impact assessments and monitoring of all

health sector reforms and developments in order to ensure that women benefitted equally from them.

B. Agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women

9. In its agreed conclusions on institutional mechanisms,[3] the Commission reaffirmed the Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women,[4] notably chapter IV, section H, on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women[5] and Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system.[6]

10. It was stated that for national machineries to be effective, clear mandates, location at the highest possible level, accountability mechanisms, partnership with civil society, a transparent political process, adequate financial and human resources, and continued strong political commitment were crucial. The importance of international cooperation in order to assist the work on national machineries in all countries, especially developing countries, was emphasized.

11. Specific recommendations were directed at Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the international community in relation to creating and strengthening the work of national machineries; to ensuring that national machineries, as well as gender focal points within institutions, were not marginalized; and to supporting and promoting balanced participation of women and men in all areas of decision-making. National machineries were requested to strengthen their relationship with civil society through regular consultations with women's organizations, academic institutions and the private sector.

12. Governments were urged to ensure that senior management in each ministry/agency took responsibility for fulfilling gender equality commitments and integrating a gender perspective in all activities, ensuring that mainstreaming a gender perspective was fully understood, institutionalized and implemented. Governments were also urged to promote transparency through effective monitoring mechanisms using gender-sensitive sex-disaggregated data, as well as other performance indicators and regular reporting, including under international agreements.

13. Governments were requested to give visibility to the relationship between remunerated and unremunerated work, and the importance of gender-analysis in this context; to develop methods for assessing the value of unremunerated work in quantitative terms; to acknowledge that unremunerated work by women was a considerable contribution to society; and to assess the real value of such work in order for it to be accurately reflected in satellite or other official accounts that were separate from, but consistent with, core national accounts.

14. The international community, including the United Nations, was called upon to implement Economic and Social Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, and to ensure that individual managers were held accountable for implementing the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995–2000). Heads of departments were invited to develop gender action plans to meet the goal of 50/50 gender distribution and to document and publish "good practices".

C. Other decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women

15. The Commission recommended three draft resolutions for adoption by the Economic and Social Council.[7] In a draft resolution on the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, the Council would condemn the continuing grave violations of the human rights of women and girls in all areas of Afghanistan and urge all Afghan parties to end all human rights violations against women and girls and to recognize, protect, promote and act in accordance with all international human rights instruments. In the draft resolution on Palestinian women, the Council would support the Middle East peace process and the need for increased efforts to ensure that the peace process was directed towards the achievement of a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. In a draft resolution on a system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002–2005, the Council would invite the Secretary-General to prepare an assessment of the current plan (1996–2001) for consideration by the Council through the Commission in 2000 and to submit the plan for 2002–2005 to the Council through the Commission in 2001.

16. In its resolution 43/1 on the release of women and children taken hostage, including those subsequently imprisoned, in armed conflicts,[8] the Commission condemned violent acts against women and children in areas of armed conflict, strongly urged all parties to armed conflicts to respect fully the norms of international humanitarian law in

armed conflict, and called for the immediate release of those taken hostage. The Commission urged all parties to armed conflicts to protect women and children and to provide them with unimpeded access to humanitarian assistance.

17. In its resolution 43/2 on women, the girl child and HIV/AIDS, the Commission recognized an alarming increase in the number of women and girls living with HIV/AIDS, as well as the link between this and prevailing gender inequalities. The Commission emphasized that the advancement and empowerment of women was critical to increasing the ability of women and young girls to protect themselves from HIV infection. The Commission urged Governments to establish a social and legal framework to support and protect the rights of those living with HIV/AIDS and to address the particular needs of women and girls in this context.

18. In its resolution 43/3 on women and mental health, with emphasis on special groups, the Commission called for the integration of mental health as a priority issue when implementing the health objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action and other relevant international agreements. It requested Governments to include in their national policies specific measures addressing the mental health needs of women and girls. The Commission urged the Secretary-General to organize, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, regional expert group meetings with a view to developing gender- and age-disaggregated and gender-sensitive psychosocial and mental health situation analyses and indicators as a basis for determining progress in women's and girls' emotional well-being and mental health.

D. Decisions of the Commission on the Status of Women acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly, "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century"

19. The Commission, acting as the Preparatory Committee, adopted a draft resolution for submission to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, by which the Assembly would invite Member States to prepare responses to the questionnaire of the Secretary-General on review and appraisal of implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Assembly would encourage the Regional Commissions to carry out regional preparatory activities. It would also encourage all entities of the United Nations system, as well as the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, to take part in preparatory activities and to participate at the highest level in the special session.

20. The General Assembly would reaffirm that the special session would take place on the basis of, and with full respect for, the Platform for Action and that there would be no renegotiation of the existing agreements contained therein. Further, the Assembly would encourage the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and other relevant actors of civil society in the preparatory process at national, regional and international levels. The Assembly would provide for the participation in the special session of non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, as well as those that were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women, without creating a precedent for future sessions of the General Assembly.

E. Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

21. The Commission adopted by consensus a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women,[9] to be recommended to the Council for adoption by the General Assembly and opening for signature, accession and ratification by States Parties to the Convention. The Protocol contains two procedures: a communications procedure allowing individual women, or groups of women, to submit to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women claims of violations of rights protected under the Convention. The Protocol also would create an inquiry procedure enabling the Committee to initiate inquiries into situations of grave or systematic violations of women's rights.

III. Results of other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council

A. Commission for Social Development

22. The Commission for Social Development held its thirty-seventh session from 9 to 19 February 1999 with "Social services for all" as a priority theme. The

Commission articulated that social services were an integral part of, and positively contribute to, social and economic development. In its agreed conclusions,[10] it stressed the primary responsibility of Governments in providing or ensuring that basic social services are available to every member of society. The elimination of discrimination against women, the empowerment and full participation of women in all areas of life and at all stages in the provision of social services were recognized as priority objectives. Gender-sensitive social services were strongly recommended, and the importance of addressing the different needs of different population groups was stressed.

B. Commission on Population and Development

23. At its thirty-second session, held on 22, 23 and 26 March 1999, the Commission on Population and Development reaffirmed in its decision 1999/1 that "Gender, population and development" should be the special theme for the Commission at its thirty-third session, in the year 2000, in order to provide inputs into the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.[11]

24. Acting as the preparatory committee for the special session of the General Assembly for the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Commission drafted proposals for the further implementation of the Programme of Action (E/CN.9/1999/PC/4). These included a chapter on "Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women" addressing issues of promotion and protection of women's human rights, empowerment of women, gender perspective in programmes and policies and advocacy against negative attitudes and practices.

C. Commission on Narcotic Drugs

25. At its twentieth special session devoted to countering the world drug problem together, held from 8 to 10 June 1998, the General Assembly adopted a Political Declaration,[12] as well as a Declaration on the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction[13] and measures to enhance international cooperation to counter the world drug problem.[14] The Political Declaration sets out a global strategy to reduce both supply and demand of illicit drugs. Member States undertook to ensure that women and men benefit equally from drug control strategies. The Declaration on the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction explicitly states that demand reduction policies should be sensitive to both culture and gender and that programmes should be effective, relevant and accessible to those groups most at risk, taking into account differences in gender, culture and education.

26. As follow-up to the special session, the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-second session, held at Vienna from 16 to 25 March 1999, recommended to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council a draft action plan for the implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction. The action plan would offer guidance to Member States in implementing the commitments of the Declaration and would focus on the need to design demand reduction campaigns and programmes to meet the needs of the population in general, as well as those of specific population groups, taking into account differences in gender, culture and education and paying special attention to youth. The action plan would state that demand reduction efforts should be developed with the participation of target groups, giving special attention to a gender perspective.

D. Commission on Human Rights

27. The agenda of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission on Human Rights (22 March to 30 April 1999) included for the first time an item entitled "Integration of the human rights of women and the gender perspective", with violence against women as a sub-item (item 12). The Commission adopted three resolutions specific to women's enjoyment of their human rights, and also addressed the rights and situation of the girl child. Gender issues formed part of a number of resolutions dealing with the work of human rights treaty bodies and of country-specific and thematic rapporteurs.

28. The Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, the Chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Women and a Vice-Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women addressed the Commission during consideration of item 12. The Special Adviser welcomed the inclusion of a specific item on the human rights of women on the Commission's agenda, but underlined its responsibility to integrate a gender perspective into all items on its agenda. She also focused on the implementation of the joint work plan of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat and the Office

of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which was before the Commission (E/CN.4/1999/67/Add.1 and E/CN.6/1999/2 and Add.1).

1. Women's enjoyment of human rights

29. In its resolution 1999/41 on integrating the human rights of women throughout the United Nations system, the Commission on Human Rights called upon all relevant actors to implement agreed conclusions 1997/2 and 1998/2 of the Economic and Social Council. The goal of universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination by the year 2000 was reiterated, and support was expressed for the early entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention following action by the General Assembly. The Commission called for further strengthening of cooperation to promote women's human rights more effectively, including through systematic gender mainstreaming by all human rights mechanisms. It requested the continued preparation of the joint work plan between the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat and the Office of the High Commissioner. Human rights mechanisms were encouraged to contribute to the special session of the General Assembly, in June 2000, to review and appraise the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Commission also expressed its determination to integrate a gender perspective into all its agenda items.

30. In its resolution 1999/40 on traffic in women and girls, the Commission invited Governments to take measures aimed at eliminating trafficking in women, and to assist women victims of trafficking. United Nations bodies and organizations were called upon to continue their activities in this field. In resolution 1999/42 the Commission commended the Special Rapporteur on violence against women for her work; called upon Governments to undertake specific measures for the prevention and elimination of violence against women; and urged human rights mechanisms to give consideration to this issue in their work, as well as to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur. Emphasis was placed on the need to fully implement obligations under the Convention with regard to violence against women.

2. Gender issues in the work of human rights treaty bodies, thematic rapporteurs and other mechanisms

31. In several resolutions, the Commission called upon Special Rapporteurs, including those on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (1999/35), on religious intolerance (1999/39), and the working group on enforced or involuntary disappearances (1999/38), to apply a gender perspective in their work, including in information collection and the formulation of recommendations, and through the identification of gender-specific abuses. Several were invited to exchange views and cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

32. In resolution 1999/36 on freedom of opinion and expression, the Commission drew attention to the existing gap for women in the effective enjoyment of that right. It urged Governments to implement effective measures to eliminate the atmosphere of fear that prevented women victims of violence from communicating freely on their own behalf, or through intermediaries, and to ensure that women exercising those rights were not discriminated against in such areas as employment, housing and social services. The Commission invited the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right of freedom of opinion and expression to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on violence against women in considering obstacles that impeded women's ability to make informed choices in areas of particular importance to them, as well as in areas related to the general decision-making processes in the societies in which they live. The Commission urged States to combat practices of religious intolerance that violated the human rights of women and discriminated against them (resolution 1999/39).

33. In its resolution 1999/32, the Commission invited the Special Rapporteur on torture to continue to examine questions concerning torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment directed against women and conditions conducive to such torture and to make appropriate recommendations concerning prevention and redress of gender-specific forms of torture, including through rape or any form of sexual violence.

34. In its resolution 1999/47, the Commission welcomed the specific attention paid by the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons to the special assistance, protection and development needs of internally displaced women and children and encouraged him to continue to draw attention to those needs. In establishing a Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants in its resolution 1999/44, the Commission included among the Rapporteur's functions the application of a gender perspective when requesting and analysing information, and attention to the occurrence of multiple discrimination and violence against migrant women.

3. Attention to gender in issue-specific resolutions

35. The Commission highlighted the situation of women, or particular forms of human rights violations suffered by women, in conjunction with several issues and stressed the importance of systematically taking into account a gender perspective when dealing with such issues or topics. For example, in resolution 1999/24 on the right to food, the Commission noted that more than 800 million people, especially women and children, did not have enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs. Attention was drawn to the needs of women and children as the most vulnerable groups concerning the full enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and United Nations agencies were invited to cooperate with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, particularly with regard to girls' right to education (resolution 1999/25). Treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, were invited to take into account the question of extreme poverty and human rights (resolution 1999/26), and the report of the Special Rapporteur on this question was to be made available to the Commission on the Status of Women. In a decision addressed to the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities concerning the establishment of a Social Forum, the Commission identified as one of the objectives of the Forum the examination of the relationship between income distribution, the feminization of poverty and human rights at both the international and national levels (resolution 1999/53). The need to apply a gender perspective in the implementation of the right to development was affirmed, *inter alia*, by ensuring that women played an active role in the development process through full participation on a basis of equality in all spheres of society (resolution 1999/79).

36. In its resolution 1999/27 on human rights and terrorism, the Commission deplored the suffering of innocent victims, including women and children. The arbitrary deprivation of nationality on grounds including gender was also identified as a violation of human rights (resolution 1999/28. The need to combat impunity for violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, including those perpetrated against women, was called for (resolution 1999/34). In addressing contemporary forms of slavery (resolution 1999/46), the Commission highlighted trafficking and sexual exploitation of women. The importance of systematically adopting a gender-based approach throughout the preparations for and in the outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance was stressed (resolution 1999/78).

37. The need for measures to eliminate stigmatization of and discrimination against women infected and affected by HIV/AIDS was addressed in resolution 1999/49, and human rights mechanisms, including the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, were called upon to integrate the protection of HIV-related human rights in their work.

38. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights was encouraged to establish a guideline on gender inclusivity in all official languages of the United Nations, for use in the preparation of all its communications, reports and publications (resolution 1999/60). Member States also were urged to develop comprehensive and sustainable national plans of action for human rights education and public information complementary to those relating to women. The establishment, within such plans, of public access to human rights resource and training centres capable of engaging in gender-sensitive training of trainers was encouraged.

39. In resolution 1999/62 States were invited to promote a culture of peace based, *inter alia*, on the wider participation of women and equal opportunities for all and, in resolution 1999/64 the Commission identified human rights education as an important vehicle for the elimination of gender-based discrimination and for ensuring equal opportunities through the promotion and protection of the human rights of women. Relevant organs, bodies and agencies of the United Nations system were called upon to provide training in the human rights of women for all United Nations personnel and officials.

40. The protection and promotion of the rights of the girl child were comprehensively addressed, and the further mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes relating to children was called for (resolution 1999/80). In the context of armed conflict, States were urged to protect women and children from all acts of gender-based violence, including rape and other forms of sexual violence, sexual exploitation and forced pregnancy. The need for humanitarian responses to address the special reproductive health needs of girls and women, including those arising from pregnancy as a result of rape, sexual mutilation, childbirth at an early age or infection with sexually transmitted diseases was emphasized and gender-sensitized education programmes for armed forces and civilian police were called for. Specific dangers faced by girls in conjunction with child labour were highlighted. The agreed conclusions on women and health adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women were welcomed. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was commended for the high priority it accorded to education for all, in particular girls' education. Educational institutions and the

United Nations system were called upon to develop and implement gender-sensitive strategies to address the particular needs of the girl child in education.

4. Country-specific resolutions

41. The Commission requested several country rapporteurs, including those on Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Sudan, Myanmar, Equatorial Guinea and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to apply a gender perspective systematically in the reporting process, including in information collection and recommendations. A number of country-specific resolutions referred to gender as a factor in the enjoyment of human rights:

(a) Afghanistan (resolution 1999/9): recalling resolutions adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women, expressing its deep concern about the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan, and taking into account the report of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women on her visit to Afghanistan in November 1997, the Commission condemned the continuing grave violations of the human rights of women and girls. It urged all the Afghan parties, in particular the Taliban, to bring to an end all violations of the human rights of women and girls in areas such as their participation in public life, in work and employment, education, security of person, freedom of movement and access to social services. The repeal of all legislative and other measures that discriminated against women was called for. Specific follow-up action was addressed to the Secretary-General, the Special Rapporteur, the Member States and the international community concerning the human rights of women and girls and the application of a gender perspective, including the implementation of the recommendations of the inter-agency gender mission to Afghanistan of November 1997;

(b) Islamic Republic of Iran (resolution 1999/13): the positive statements by the Government about the need to review laws and attitudes that discriminated against women, and the gradual increase of the presence of women in public life in the Islamic Republic of Iran were noted. The Commission expressed its concern at the continued lack of full and equal enjoyment by women of their human rights, and called upon the Government to take further measures to eliminate the continued discrimination in law and in practice against women;

(c) Sudan (resolution 1999/15): the Commission expressed its deep concern at the adverse effect of the current conflict on the civilian population, in particular women and children, such as the abduction of women and children to be subjected to forced labour or similar conditions. It called upon the Government to investigate reports of such abductions in southern Sudan and to accept a multilateral investigation into the causes of those abductions, as well as ways and means for eradicating the practice;

(d) Myanmar (resolution 1999/17): the Commission welcomed Myanmar's accession to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. It deplored the continuing abuse of women and children by Government agents, the violations of the rights of women, especially women who were refugees, internally displaced women and women belonging to ethnic minorities of the political opposition, in particular forced labour, sexual violence and exploitation, including rape. It urged the Government to put an end to such violations, and to fulfil its obligations under the Convention;

(e) Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), the Republic of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (resolution 1999/18): in referring to Kosovo, the Commission condemned ongoing war crimes and abuses of human rights resulting in rape and harsh living conditions for the civilian population. It insisted that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) improve the situation of ethnic Albanian women and children. Referring to the Republic of Croatia, the Commission endorsed the Special Rapporteur's recommendation for affirmative measures to improve the representation of women in decision-making positions;

(f) Equatorial Guinea (resolution 1999/19): the Government was encouraged to continue its efforts to integrate women effectively into the process of socio-economic, cultural and political development of the country;

(g) Rwanda (resolution 1999/20): the Government was urged, and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda invited, to give utmost priority to the prosecution and punishment of crimes of sexual violence committed against women, and the decision of the Tribunal to give a broad definition to acts of sexual violence was welcomed. The Government's proposal to ensure greater legal access of women to their husbands' and parents' property through the proposed law on matrimonial property and succession was welcomed;

(h) Democratic Republic of the Congo (resolution 1999/56): the Commission expressed its concern at reports of sexual violence against women and children and the forcible recruitment and use of children as soldiers and combatants, and called upon all parties to respect the rights of women;

(i) Somalia (resolution 1999/75): the Commission expressed its deep concern at reports of violence against women and children, and condemned widespread violations and abuses of human rights and humanitarian law, in particular against minorities, women and children;

(j) Cambodia (resolution 1999/76): the Commission welcomed recent governmental measures to improve the status of women, and urged the Government to take all necessary steps, including technical assistance, to eliminate discrimination against women, including in political and public life, to combat violence against women in all its forms, and to take steps to meet its obligations under the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women;

(k) Haiti (resolution 1999/77): the Commission noted with gratitude the report of the independent expert (A/53/355), welcoming in particular his analysis of and attention to the issues affecting the enjoyment by women of their human rights, including violence against women. It called upon the Government, in collaboration with women's groups and the international community, to put in place measures to address violence against women, including the development of training programmes for judicial and legal personnel and the incorporation of the human rights of women in all levels of the education system.

E. Commission on Sustainable Development

42. The Commission on Sustainable Development held its seventh session from 19 to 30 April 1999 with the main focus on the sustainable use of oceans and seas, consumption and production patterns, sustainable tourism and the problems facing small island developing States.

43. The Commission recommended, *inter alia*, the expansion of the United Nations guidelines on consumer protection to include sustainable consumption. It was also decided that the goal of changing consumer behaviour patterns should be pursued by all countries in full compliance with Agenda 21[15] and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21.[16] Poverty eradication was reaffirmed as an important issue in the work programme of the Commission. Notably, no specific recommendations pertaining to gender and consumption patterns were approved.

44. The Commission invited Governments, major groups, one of which is women, and the United Nations system, to work together in order to increase the benefits from tourism for the host countries and maintain cultural and environmental integrity. The United Nations Secretariat and the World Tourism Organization were invited to facilitate the establishment of an ad hoc open-ended working group on tourism with one of the goals being to maximize benefits for indigenous and local communities.

F. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

45. The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, meeting at Vienna from 27 April to 6 May 1999, addressed issues of particular relevance to women or concerning a gender perspective in several draft resolutions it recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council, and the General Assembly. Mechanisms for crime prevention concerning domestic violence, and trafficking in persons, especially women and children would be analysed by a planned interregional expert group meeting (E/CN.15/1999/L.3/Rev.1). The Council would welcome the Commission's resolution 7/1 to mainstream a gender perspective into all its activities, as well as into the work of the Centre for International Crime Prevention (E/CN.15/1999/L.5/Rev.1). The need to mainstream a gender perspective would be underlined in particular with regard to programmes relating to children and young people in the criminal justice system (E/CN.15/1999/L.7/Rev.1). A draft Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice, to be transmitted to the tenth Crime Congress, would commit Member States to the incorporation of a gender perspective into national and international crime prevention and criminal justice strategies. They would also commit themselves to the development of action-oriented policy recommendations based on the special needs of women as criminal justice practitioners, victims, prisoners and offenders. The same draft addressed trafficking in human beings, especially women and children (E/CN.15/1999/L.8/Rev.1). In conjunction with the preparation of the draft convention against transnational organized crime and the protocols thereto, the draft protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in women and children would be made applicable to all persons so as to promote gender equality (E/CN.15/1999/L.9).

G. Statistical Commission

46. Although the Statistical Commission, at its thirtieth session, held from 1 to 5 March 1999 did not consider gender as a specific topic, gender issues and sex-disaggregated data were among the main topics discussed, including two papers

on "Harmonization and rationalization of development indicators in the United Nations system" (E/CN.3/1999/14), and "Progress report on demographic, social and migration statistics" (E/CN.3/1999/9). The latter reviewed recent work of the Statistics Division in the field of gender statistics.

IV. Activities of the regional commissions

A. Economic Commission for Africa

47. In 1997, the African Centre for Women at the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) began organizing subregional level follow-up meetings on the implementation of the African Platform for Action and the Beijing Platform for Action. Meetings were held in June 1998 for the Central Africa region, in October 1998 for the North Africa region and in February 1999, for the Eastern and Southern Africa region. The first two meetings emphasized the formulation and assessment of national action plans, and the third the mid-term evaluation process and the need for follow-up on the recommendations of the ECA conference held in April 1998 on the theme "African women and economic development: investing in our future".

B. Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

48. At its second session, held in April 1999, the Committee on Social Development, a subsidiary committee of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), adopted recommendations concerning implementation of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the integrated follow-up to global conferences.

49. During the period under review, ESCWA provided advisory services, upon request, to Yemen, Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Jordan and Lebanon in institution- and capacity-building for national machineries for women and non-governmental organizations concerned with women's issues and gender equality. Technical assistance in the preparation of national reports on progress achieved in implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action for submission to the General Assembly at its special session in June 2000 was also provided.

50. ESCWA is building a gender-sensitive database on information and social policies and measures of impact on women, gender and family issues, and is developing region-specific indicators for monitoring progress achieved in the advancement of women and gender equality. ESCWA has focused on advocating innovative approaches to poverty alleviation of poor women in rural and urban areas, including through the establishment of micro-credit facilities.

51. ESCWA carried out surveys on the role of non-governmental organizations in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action and the Arab Plan of Action and is also coordinating its efforts with other United Nations agencies concerned with women and gender equality. It has implemented joint activities with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other agencies. In collaboration with the League of Arab States and UNIFEM, ESCWA convened a regional meeting in Beirut from 15 to 18 December 1998 to follow up on the Beijing Conference and to prepare for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000.

52. In 1998, the Executive Secretary of ESCWA established an ad hoc working group to formulate a plan of action for mainstreaming a gender perspective into policies, plans and programmes of ESCWA. In pursuance of the Plan of Action, an overall coordinator for ESCWA has been designated and gender focal points have been designated in each division; gender mainstreaming has been introduced on a gradual and phased basis into the planning and programming process in ESCWA; and work-months have been earmarked for gender activities to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of the process. Capacity-building and a gender training package for all ESCWA staff (senior and middle management, regional advisers, Professionals and General Service supervisory staff) will be introduced during the last quarter of 1999 and until the end of 2001.

C. Economic Commission for Europe

53. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) will hold a meeting of all United Nations and non-United Nations organizations active in issues of women's advancement and gender equality in the ECE region to review the progress made and obstacles encountered in the work of participating agencies in their respective fields of competence.

54. At the intergovernmental level, ECE will convene a meeting to review economic issues, problems and policies relating to the situation of women in ECE countries. Other issues will also be addressed according to the respective interests and work areas of other organizations to be involved in the preparation of the meeting, in particular the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the European Commission and the Council of Europe. On the

occasion of the 2000 review, ECE will produce a major publication on women and men in Europe and North America, providing data and trends which have been developed since the Fourth World Conference on Women.

D. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

55. As a follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action, the second phase of the two-year project on institutionalizing the gender perspective in the substantive work of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was initiated in the first part of 1999. This project, which aims to strengthen and consolidate an institutional approach, will further the work of the pilot project executed during the second half of 1997 with the collaboration of the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, which sought to mainstream the gender perspective explicitly and systematically into the work of ECLAC. This phase will primarily focus on cooperation for development by fostering a similar process in the sectoral ministries of selected Member States.

56. ECLAC has concentrated on the systematic development of gender indicators, with emphasis on the strategic areas identified in the Platform for Action and the Regional Programme of Action for the Women of Latin America and the Caribbean, 1995–2001, with the aim of assisting Governments in the region to formulate public policies from a gender perspective and to evaluate the implementation of the commitments and agreements undertaken. As a result, ECLAC has prepared a reference document on gender indicators for the follow-up and assessment of the Platform for Action and the Regional Programme of Action to be distributed at the regional level by mid-May 1999.

E. Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

57. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) has focused on women and the economy in a changing global environment, women and poverty, violence against women, women and the economy, human rights of women and women and media, in accordance with the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action for the Advancement of the Women in Asia and the Pacific and the Beijing Platform for Action. A high-level meeting to review the implementation of the Jakarta Declaration and Plan of Action and regional implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is planned from 26 to 29 October 1999 in Bangkok. An expert group meeting on the regional implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was held at Bangkok on 1 and 2 April 1999, where the provisional agenda of the high-level meeting and the background documents to facilitate deliberations were discussed.

58. A plan of action for promoting women in small businesses was adopted at a subregional workshop held in Viet Nam, which called for concrete action on such issues as credit, marketing, technology, networking and reform of the legal and regulatory framework. A regional meeting on the impact of globalization on women held at Bangkok examined the implications of globalization, focusing on women and economic liberalization, technological change and female migration, while adaptive policies and programmes were formulated.

59. A project on the promotion of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women through non-governmental organizations of networks in the Pacific was launched in 1998, and has been effectively supporting non-governmental organizations in their awareness-raising activities at the grass roots. ESCAP support to the Pacific on promotion of the Convention was further facilitated by co-organizing a consultative meeting with UNDP and the Pacific Community on the implementation of the Convention and promoting women's rights. A Regional Conference on Trafficking in Women was held at Bangkok, at which the Bangkok Accord and Plan of Action was adopted.

60. A handbook promoting the use of communication and information technology as a tool for women's empowerment and containing practical training material on information and communication mechanisms was produced and has been much appreciated by users. Activities under the Women's Information Network for Asia and the Pacific (WINAP) continued through the biannual *WINAP Newsletter* and the Women in Development (WID) home page. Within ESCAP, a staff training on incorporating gender issues into project planning and design was held to introduce the concept of gender mainstreaming and foster discussion on its importance, particularly in the context of the United Nation's goals and policies.

V. Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality of the Administrative Committee on Coordination

61. The fourth session of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality took place at United Nations Headquarters from 23 to 26 February 1999. The Committee's activities were previously reported in documents E/1998/53, and E/CN.6/1999/2. The Committee uses a system of task managers for inter-sessional work on its ongoing activities and their reports formed the basis of the Committee's decisions.

62. For the first time, the Committee held a one-day dialogue with resident coordinators and agency field representatives around implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming. The dialogue was intended to strengthen the knowledge base with regard to field-level implementation of gender-specific conference recommendations. Field-based representatives participated in the workshop, from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNICEF, UNDP, UNIFEM, the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The Committee decided to include a regular item on its agenda to review the extent to which implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming were reflected in common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process, to be based on feedback from the field and analysis provided by the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Sub-Group on Gender.

63. Four topics were discussed during the workshop: (a) opportunities and constraints to track and measure progress in gender equality: the example of common country assessments; (b) mainstreaming a gender perspective into all thematic groups and inter-agency activities at the national level — examples and best/worst practices; (c) the United Nations Development Assistance Framework process and inter-agency activities, their strengths and weaknesses for integrating follow-up to Beijing; and (d) networking for, and monitoring implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (local partnerships; reporting on women and gender issues to Headquarters; tapping resources available in the United Nations system beyond one's own agency — the role of the Committee). Based on panel presentations by resident coordinators and agency field representatives and follow-up discussions, the Committee adopted a set of conclusions and recommendations. These were subsequently submitted to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions as input into its ongoing work on operational questions. The Committee also invited the Sub-Group on Gender to bring them to the attention of UNDG.

64. The Committee approved the prototype format for the database of good practices on implementation of the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming. By early 1999, the task force had received approximately 60 submissions from United Nations entities for possible inclusion in the database. After further refinement of the information provided, all cases that meet at least some of the criteria set by the Committee will be included in the electronic database that will be hosted through the inter-agency Web site (WomenWatch). The Committee will also develop a publication of not more than 20 cases of selected good practices, to be produced for the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. The publication will aim to communicate examples of United Nations accomplishments in implementing the Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming.

65. The Committee noted progress made in the preparation of the study on the WID/gender focal point function, and its completion by the end of the year. The study is also expected to provide insights into management commitment to gender mainstreaming, and thus constitutes a further follow-up to the agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council. The Committee also decided that work on budget codes and financial monitoring systems should continue, with a view to developing guidelines for financial monitoring including budget codes in support of gender equality, for submission and action by the Committee at its fifth session.

66. The issue of gender impact analysis will receive priority attention in preparation for the fifth session. This work will initially focus on the organizational level of gender mainstreaming, and on the project level, both nationally and sectorally. Further consideration will be given as to whether, and how, gender impact analysis in normative work should be added in the future. The Committee's objectives in this area are: (a) to establish a framework for inter-agency work; (b) to exchange experiences among Committee members on current practices and methodologies used; and (c) to improve gender impact analysis to influence policies. The Committee also continued work on a two-part statement by the Administrative Committee on Coordination as input into the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. Part one will be a short policy statement presenting the system's outlook on gender equality in the

twenty-first century; and part two will consist of supporting analysis and practical steps and measures for translating the policy statement into practice.

67. The Committee's secretariat, as well as its activities, are accommodated within the regular workload of its members. These activities have been implemented in a collaborative manner by members through task forces and task managers. Several of the Committee's activities, however, have been delayed because of lack of resources. Consequently, the Committee established a task force, to be chaired by the Division for the Advancement of Women, to develop a funding strategy for the Committee's projects and activities. It will also undertake a survey of the resource base of other mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination.

68. The Committee submitted a proposal to the Commission on the Status of Women for a two-phased preparation of the new system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 2002–2005, currently requested to be prepared for the year 2000 (see Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/34). A first phase, to be submitted to the Commission and the Council in 2000, would consist of an assessment of activities undertaken by the United Nations system, of obstacles encountered, and lessons learned from the present plan, and the system-wide process of its implementation. A second phase, to be submitted to the Council through the Commission in 2001, would be prepared in the light of the results of the special session of the General Assembly in June 2000. This suggestion was taken up by the Commission, and a draft resolution on this matter is before the Council for action.[17]

69. The Committee will convene a workshop on the topic of women's empowerment in the context of human security, tentatively scheduled to take place in mid-December 1999 at Bangkok. The workshop will explore challenges to women's human security — such as protection from physical and mental harm, freedom from fear and want — in the context of present global and regional realities; and how a focus on the various elements of human security can contribute to strengthening women's empowerment.

70. The Committee continued its efforts to strengthen links with other mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, in particular the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions. It held a discussion with the Under-Secretary-General of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in his capacity as Chairperson of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and CCPOQ on areas, and means, for strengthening attention to gender consideration in the work of those committees.

71. The fifth session of the Committee will take place at United Nations Headquarters from 1 to 3 March 2000.

Notes

[1] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1.

[2] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I, sect. B, resolution IV, sect. I.

[3] Ibid., sect. II.

[4] *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4–15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

[5] General Assembly resolution 34/180, annex.

[6] See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-second Session, Supplement No. 3* (A/52/3), chap. IV, sect. A, para. 4.

[7] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I, sect. B.

[8] Ibid., sect. D.

[9] Ibid., sect. A.

[10] Ibid., *Supplement No. 6* (E/1999/26), chap. I, sect. D, resolution 37/1.

[11] Ibid., *Supplement No. 5* (E/1999/25), chap. I.

[12] General Assembly resolution S-20/2, annex.

[13] General Assembly resolution S-20/3, annex.

[14] General Assembly resolution S-20/4.

[15] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

[16] General Assembly resolution S/19–2, annex.

[17] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 7* (E/1999/27), chap. I, sect. B, draft resolution III.